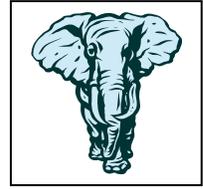


## ELEPHANTS IN THE LIVING ROOM DISCUSSING WHAT CAN'T BE DISCUSSED



### MICHAEL HIMES PRESENTATION

Our Lady of Fatima  
Oak Park, MI  
June 28, 2004

Sponsored by The Elephants in the Living Room.  
Funded by Bishop Tom Gumbleton  
Hosted by Fr. Paul Chateau, Pastor, Our Lady of Fatima

Purpose of the meeting: To develop ideas to forward to the Presbyteral Council and for the Priest Convocation in the Fall 2004.

List possible positive suggestions:

- For the presbyterate
- For the parishes
- For the archdiocese.

Opening Prayer: Fr. Bob Wurm, based on the liturgy for the feast of John the Baptist

Facilitator: Fr. Ed Scheuerman

Introduction: Bishop Tom Gumbleton

Fr. Michael Himes was ordained a diocesan priest in Brooklyn, NY in 1972. He received a PhD from the University of Chicago and held the position of Dean of Studies at the seminary in Macklin, NY. He has been a professor theology at Notre Dame and is now a professor of theology at Boston College. He has received a Phi Beta Kappa for outstanding teaching at Boston College. Fr. Himes is the author of several books and a sought after lecturer.

Parameters for Fr. Himes talk: Issues flowing from Vatican II selected by the Elephants:

- Equality of all members of the Church vs. clericalism and GIRM
- "Sensus Fidelium" vs. "Top Down Magisterium"
- Primacy of conscience/obedience as "profound listening"
- "Current of Fear" vs. "Freedom as Sons and Daughters of God" (priest/bishop relationship)
- Church as "Community of Disciples" vs. "Mega-church" ( question of church closings, clustering, etc., use of "parochial administrators"
- "Preferential Option for the Poor" – abandonment of the inner city.

#### Presentation of Fr. Michael Himes

If we were to study the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, I would recommend looking at the document twice:

- Read Chapter 1, skip Chapter 2, then read the rest of the document.
- Read Chapter 2, then read the rest of the document.
- Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 are alternate openings of *Lumen Gentium*.
  - Chapter 2 starts over what Chapter 1 does.

Chapter 1: the Church is the sacrament of Jesus Christ.

- Sacrament is a new concept for Church
  - We think of sacrament as relating to the seven sacraments

- It declares the nature of the Church and its universal mission.
  - The nature of the Church is:
    - Intimate union with God
    - Unity of all humanity
  - The Church has two missions:
    - Sanctifying mission, i.e., saving souls
    - Social mission, i.e. caring for the poor, responding to people's needs
      - Schools
      - Hospitals
- The key word in *Lumen Gentium* is "and" (intimate union and unity of humanity)
  - What does "and" mean?
    - "And" means "in light of and because of"
  - The Church is a sign of and a sacrament of Jesus Christ
    - In light of and because of
    - There is no sanctifying mission without the social mission.
- Good theology arrives out of good experience, and shapes good experience.

Level 1 \_\_\_\_\_ grace – super nature

Level 2 \_\_\_\_\_ nature

- The Church's mission should move people from Level 2 to Level 1
- The Church's mission is to help people in level 2.
- Prior to Vatican II, priests operated at the higher mission:
  - Moving people up from Level 2 to Level 1 – sanctification
- Religious men and women operated at the lower mission:
  - Responsible at Level 2 – meeting people's needs.
- The 20<sup>th</sup> century revolution/renovation brought rethinking of nature and grace
  - Nature is the first step.
  - Human beings are created to be hearers of the word.
    - Creation exists so that God can communicate God!
      - God loves
      - God loves us into being
  - It's all grace
    - Grace is a continuing process of God's self communication
    - Nature is the first step in grace.
- By uniting both missions of the Church, we help humans become more human
  - The primary vocation is not orders, but baptism!
    - We are called to the mission by baptism
    - Orders is based on baptism!
- The difference between priests and laity
  - Orders is an ontological change
    - What does this mean?
    - It means a change in the structure of one's being.
    - If Jesus had an ontological change, was he then like the rest of us?
  - Orders empowers functions that the laity cannot perform
    - If a priest does not perform his functions, does he cease being a priest?
    - Priests didn't preside at Eucharist for the first five centuries.
      - Bishops presided.
  - What is the real difference?
    - The priest is really different because he is called to sacramentalize.
    - If something is true always and everywhere true, it must be acknowledged, accepted and celebrated and celebrated somewhere, sometime.
      - We acknowledge, accept and celebrate God's presence by Mass on Sunday in a church.

- The primary sacrament in one's life is one's spouse.
  - Other sacraments are parents, children, friends.
- Let's apply sacramentality to ministry:
  - Ministry is responsible to hold the community together – to bond with other communities
  - Ministry is responsible to and for the Word of God (Scripture + tradition)
  - Ministry is responsible to direct service to those in need.
- The names for these three ministries are:
  - Episcopacy
  - Presbyterate
  - Diaconate
- The baptized are called to these ministries.
  - Those who embody this publicly – all the time- are the ordained.
  - The ministry of the ordained is the sacramentality of the works of the laity.
- If I have met your bishop, I have met you. – Ignatius of Antioch
  - The bishop should be the embodiment of his people.
- The priest, like the rabbi, is supposed to be the tradition of Catholicism on two feet.
- Deacons embody a ministry of responding to people's needs.
- If you want to strengthen a sacrament, how do you do it?
  - By strengthening what it sacramentalizes, what it embodies.
  - For priests: work for the ministry of the baptized to strengthen them.
  - To build up the ministry of the ordained, build up the ministry of the baptized.

Break

Fr. Ed Scheuerman asked each table to discuss what they had heard and then share the points of their discussion with the entire group. See Attachment I for the verbatims.

Fr. Himes (continued)

➤ *Sensus Fidelium*, the Sense of the Faithful

- Fr. John Henry Newman, later Cardinal Newman, was editor of *The Rambler* in 1859.
  - He promoted consultation of the faithful in matters of dogma.
    - He was a teacher at Oxford of Patristics – study of the Fathers of the Church.
    - He taught that all receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, not just the hierarchy.
      - He held the concept of “jealousy of error” – they know when it is error.
      - Jealousy of error is a kind of prudence
      - Virtue is found in the middle – between two vices.
      - Where the middle is, is found by prudence.
      - Where is prudence?
        - Find virtuous people and hang out with them.
        - Prudence is the lived experience of virtuous people.
- *Sensus Fidelium* comes from living with faithful people.
  - Consulting the lived wisdom of the Church's people.
  - This is what is meant coming from the Body of Christ.
- John Sabastian Drey, Thubingen theologian stated:
  - “There is a public opinion in the Church.”
  - But how do you read that public opinion?
    - By what people read?
    - By how people vote?
- The issue is: how do you read *Sensus Fidelium*?
  - People have a right and a duty to make their needs known to pastors (canon 212).
    - How is this to happen?
    - It's one thing to have a right of *Sensus Fidelium*.

- We do not have in the Church an institutional means to support and bring about this right.
  - The Church has to construct a forum so that Sensus Fidelium can happen – can be realized!
    - Cardinal Dearden started this – but it has been subverted.
      - Who sets the agenda?
      - Who writes the minutes.
  - The Church's structures do not echo its best description of itself.
    - This gathering is about how we attain these ends, not just the means to these ends.
  - When we say "Church," what do we mean?
    - How we understand Church will direct us to what we do.
- The greatest problem in the Church is authority and the way it is used!
  - Authority has always come from the bottom up.
  - How much power does Rome have?
    - As much as the local bishops give it.
  - Most priests know how to maneuver around the bishop.
    - The bishop is dependent on what the pastors will do.
  - Power has always come from the grass roots.
- Infallibility belongs to the Church, not to the pope alone (Vatican I)!
  - Faith is given to the Church and employed by the pope.
- The Church has a right and an obligation to preserve its existence.
  - If a structure threatens the Church, the Church can change that structure (15<sup>th</sup> century).
  - We need to look at structures in the Church that are not absolute or not always have been.
    - The first Canon Law was 1917.
    - In 1917 less than 30% of the bishops were appointed by Rome.
    - Today, bishops are appointed by Rome.
      - It's the "tradition" of the Church.
  - History – you discover the past and the possibilities for the future.
    - Are there other ways that bishops can be selected?
    - There are no current structures for discussing this.
      - This conference is doing this.
    - The fact that you are not being listened to does not mean that you are not being heard.
  - On the whole, if you are picking allies, God is a good one to have.
- What do we mean by Church?
  - What is the Church's mission?
  - What are the structures to facilitate this?
  - The People of God have much more power than they think they have.
  - John Paul II is the successor to Peter, but he doesn't have the same job description as Peter.
    - Gregory the Great was Bishop of Rome over about 6,000 people – a midsize parish in Detroit.
    - Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, had no more than 3,000 souls – a small parish in Detroit.
  - The Church has restructured itself continuously over time.
    - The structures were not there from the beginning.
    - If the structures need to be changed, change them!
- Finally – Mega-parishes:
  - Parishes exist for service to the People of God.
    - Parishes need to be smaller to service the people.
  - We have moved to larger parishes because of the priest shortage.
    - We do not have a shortage of priests.
    - We have a shortage of imagination (vision).
  - If you define a vocation as male, celibate

- And vocations are going down,
- Then there is a shortage of ministry
- Maybe the definition is too narrow.
  - If you define all birds in terms of the dodo bird,
  - Others will point out that the dodo bird is extinct.
  - Therefore, all birds are extinct.
  - Then how do you explain what is flying around in the air and singing in the trees?
- The Church is reluctant to tap into the resources it has.
- Mega-churches can marginalize the poor.
- The Church has modeled itself through time on:
  - Roman government – dioceses
  - Feudalism – hierarchy
  - Absolute monarchy – 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> centuries
  - The new model today is corporate management.
- Final point: *Theology of Ministry* by Tom O'Malley:
  - Ministry is an act done of building up the Kingdom of God in service to another in authorization of the community.
  - Baptism is the first recognition of ministry!

#### Election

Fr. Ed Scheuerman asked all who attended if they wished to become members of the Elephants. There was unanimous approval. He asked if these were anyone who did not wish to become a member. No one spoke up. All attendees who signed the roster were added to the membership list.

#### Closing Comments

- How do we capture history?
  - What were people then experiencing?
  - Church history use to be the history of the pope and the bishops.
- The Church needs to listen to humanity to what it needs
  - Those in need, the most oppressed, need to be the trendsetters.
- We have an opportunity to address parish clustering to come up with a plan!

#### Suggestions for Presbyterate, Parishes and Archdiocese

Each attendee was asked to state his/her suggestions for the presbyterate, for the parishes, and for the archdiocese to be forwarded to the Presbyteral Council and to be used at the Fall conference of priests. See Attachment II.

#### Next Meetings

The next meeting of the Elephants in the Room will be at St. Ives, Southfield, MI on July 13, 2004 at 12:30. No lunch will be served.

There is a planning meeting of clergy members of the Elephants in the Room at Day House in Detroit on July 6, 2004 at 10:00 to discuss future conferences.

There is a meeting of the subcommittee on Parish Clustering at Our Lady of Fatima, Oak Park, MI on July 6, 2004 at 1:30.

*Tom Kyle*  
Secretary

#### Attachments:

- I. Roundtable Discussions Verbatims
- II. Responses